



**Alberta  
Cattle  
Commission**

# GRASS ROUTES

*The Alberta cattle producer newsletter.*

## Inside

**2**

- *Special Places 2000*
- *Olympic Athletes Pay-off*

**3**

- *New Grading Research*
- *Alberta's New Livestock Investigator*

**4**

- *CCA Update*
- *CANFAX Market Summary*



## Producers vote non-refundable

*Industry chooses to operate with stable funding base*

**By Larry Sears, Chairman**

The plebiscite results show that cattle producers recognize a secure funding base is the best way to finance their industry organization. Alberta Cattle Commission (ACC) delegates advocated that a stable funding base is essential to the success of the ACC.

All cattle producers want a responsive and efficient organization that will maximize the industry's ability to address challenges and speak with one voice. We are committed to reviewing the structure and representation in the organization to see if there is a better way to accomplish our goals and improve our communication.

The check-off conflict was unfortunate because of the time, expense and industry unity lost. The ACC will work to rebuild industry unity. However, we recognize that there will always be an element that does not agree with everything the ACC does, how the ACC is represented, or unhappy that they no longer have the influence they once had.

We will try to address these concerns but we can't expect to get everyone on side. And I don't think that's how democracy works - you take the views of the majority and carry on with the business at hand.

Marketing Council must also recognize that there will never be unanimous industry consensus. We now look forward to Marketing Council playing a

supportive role for the industry.

The ACC will get back to work and address the challenges in front of us: developing new markets and more exports, promoting beef - maintaining our market share on the consumer shelf, research that will improve our technology and competitiveness, and making sure we have an operating environment within the province that will not hinder our industry. I invite all producers to participate in the process.

## Vote breakdown

Alberta cattle producers voted to continue funding the Alberta Cattle Commission (ACC) with a mandatory non-refundable check-off. The result of the government organized plebiscite was 52.7 per cent of those who voted support non-refundability.

A total of 7,410 producers cast ballots with 3,876 voting in favor of continuing the non-refundable check-off. A total of 3,483 producers voted for a refundable check-off and 51 ballots were spoiled.

Voting was held at 35 producer meetings across the province, via mail-in ballots and at DA offices. The majority of producers (65 per cent) voted at DA offices. Ballots cast at information meetings totaled 22 per cent and 13 per cent took advantage of the mail-in ballot.

The plebiscite cost approximately \$60,000. Due to government cutbacks, the ACC was required to cover all plebiscite costs.

## Did you know?

*According to the 1991 census, there are 34,912 farms in Alberta with cattle (61 per cent of the total farms in Alberta). Based on this number, producers from 21 per cent of farms with cattle voted in the check-off plebiscite.*

**Strength from the ground up.**



## Olympic athletes pay-off again

*The beef industry's relationship with Olympic athletes has paid off again with Canada beef spokesmen Isabelle Brasseur and Lloyd Eisler winning Bronze at the Lillehammer Winter Olympics. The figure skating pair's Bronze performance is especially rewarding considering that professional skaters were allowed to compete at the 1994 games. Brasseur and Eisler were featured in television beef ads which aired 48 times during the Olympics in both English and French markets. The strategy of the ad campaign was to remind consumers that beef consumption is healthy and enhances performance. Featuring Brasseur - who is fit, petite and eats beef six to seven times a week - is especially effective for reaching women.*



## Our approach to Special Places 2000

### The Process

There is a new environmental protection initiative in the works that could seriously affect land use on crown and private land.

In 1992, all the provincial governments signed an agreement to set aside representative samples of their unique ecosystems totaling nine to 12 per cent of each province's land area. Each province is responsible for implementing their own program. In Alberta, the program is called Special Places 2000.

The original proposal was drafted by a government committee and then opened to public consultation. The results of the consultation process were used to refine the report which is now before the government for departmental review. The proposal has been fast tracked and initial implementation targets have been set for as early as 1994.

### The Problem

The entire thrust of Special Places 2000 is based on legislated protection of the designated areas. The program calls for extensive restrictions on land use as dictated by the environmental sensitivity of the area. Special Places 2000 also calls for controls on surrounding buffer zones and connecting corridors that could increase the impact of Special Places to 40 per cent of the province. So far targeted areas have not been identified. Crown lands will likely be incorporated into the program.

### Our Response

The Alberta Cattle Commission (ACC) has prepared a response to the government advisory committee on Special Places 2000. The following are main points from the submission.

*Cattle producers are committed to the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat on the extensive areas that they own or control. They believe that properly managed extensive grazing of cattle is compatible with the protection of biodiversity and the maintenance of natural ecosystems.*

*The cattle industry remains opposed to the concept, inherent in the Special Places 2000 report, that legislated protection is necessarily the best or even the only way of conserving natural ecosystems in all situations.*

*We applaud the government for providing an extensive public consultation process, but believe that the report reflects a "preservationist" philosophy that is not shared by most Albertans.*

*The proposal to limit or prohibit cattle grazing on most of the designated areas is at variance with the generally expressed view that properly managed cattle grazing is not detrimental to long term ecological integrity.*

*The report recognizes that "protected areas cannot exist as islands" and suggests that surrounding areas will have to conform with the objectives of the protected area. We suggest that the opposite is also true - the management and objectives of protected areas must not conflict with the management and use of surrounding areas.*

*Any implementation process involving changing the use of extensive areas of land must be driven by the views and concerns of local stakeholders.*

*The timetable proposed in the report is unrealistic and if implemented will create considerable backlash from local stakeholders who are affected.*

### What You Can Do

To effect positive changes to Special Places 2000, the government will need to hear from individual producers as well as organizations like the ACC. For a copy of the ACC response to Special Places 2000 call the office at (403) 275-4400.

We encourage producers to personally contact the government to voice your concerns. Write Brian Evans, Minister of Environmental Protection, and Ken Kowalski, Deputy Premier and Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, at Legislature Building, 10800 - 97 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2B6.

## Methane makers?

A recent study at Cornell University calculated that the entire beef cattle population in the world contributes less than one per cent of the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The average daily production of greenhouse gas by a cow is equal to that of a car driven 3.2 kilometres.





## Park users learn about cattle

Over 45,000 visitors to the Kananaskis Country provincial park will have a chance to learn about the role of cattle in range management this summer. A new display in the park interpretive centre explaining the benefits of cattle grazing in the Bow Crow forest will debut the first weekend of May with the opening of the tourist season. The Alberta Cattle Commission along with the Alberta Forest Service, Public Lands and Kananaskis Country developed the interpretive display after some park users complained about the presence of cattle on roadways and camping areas in the park.

## Grading study yields interesting results

The Alberta Cattle Commission along with four industry partners recently completed a study to verify the accuracy of the Canadian grading system in measuring true carcass value. The study also compared the current system with new video grading technology.

The purpose of the grading system is to reflect as closely as possible the true value of a carcass. Ideally a better grade should equate to a better price. With the current system, meat yield is the single highest contributor to carcass value in the "A" grades.

The study found that the current system could predict saleable meat yield to within 2.23 per cent of actual yield on 70 per cent of the animals sampled. Cut yield can be predicted to 1.44 per cent of actual yield on 70 per cent of animals sampled. Less consistent conformation in the remaining 30 per cent of carcasses reduced the accuracy of grading predictions. These animals yielded differently than graded.

New video grading technology (see **New technologies may improve grading**, January 1994) predicted saleable meat yield within 2.48 per cent of actual yield on 95 per cent of the animals sampled and cut yield within 2.12 per cent of actual yield on 95 per cent of animals sampled.

These results are by far the most promising

recorded in the world for an objective system of beef grading for meat yield.

Four hundred and sixty animals were selected from the Cargill plant in High River and the Better Beef plant in Ontario during October and November 1993. One interesting result of the study was that heifers outperformed steers by 0.7 per cent in cut yield in cattle with the same carcass weight and backfat cover.

### Yield as Per cent of Animal

100	hot carcass weight = animal - (hide + entrails + blood + waste)
76	saleable yield = hot carcass weight - (waste fat + bone + shrink)
60	cut yield = saleable yield - trimmings

Average yield: National Beef Cutout Boneless - 1/2" trim specification

## Looking for a good book?

Respected cattleman and author Frank Jacobs has written a new book called **Cattle and Us, Frankly Speaking**. Jacobs takes a positive and provocative look at the place of cattle in the global and environmental economy in a frank and humorous fashion. To order or for more information call Temeron Books Inc., at (403) 283-0900.

## New RCMP livestock investigator on duty

The Alberta livestock industry now has a dedicated RCMP livestock investigator working to protect cattle producers.

RCMP Corporal Emil Smetaniuk (outside right photo) is the new livestock investigator. He has served 27 years with the RCMP as well as three years as a livestock investigator in Red Deer and Lethbridge.

The livestock investigator position was established following a study conducted by the Solicitor General, the RCMP, Alberta Agriculture and the Alberta Cattle Commission which indicated the high

volume of cattle sold in Alberta warranted a dedicated investigator. Over 1,500 head of cattle were reported missing or stolen in 1993 - a loss of \$1.5 million to producers.

The future of the program will be determined by the level of producer interest and participation. Corporal Smetaniuk is based out of Calgary and will work closely with producers, brand inspectors, and local RCMP to investigate livestock thefts.

If you have lost livestock or have information on livestock thefts or just a few questions call Corporal Smetaniuk at 291-6200.





## Industry development funds

Two separate funds have been created to assist the Canadian cattle industry with research, market development and promotion. The funds were sourced from the termination of the National Tripartite Stabilization Program (NTSP).

The first fund called the NTSP opt-out fund was created from premiums of producers who opted out of the NTSP before it was terminated. It contains approximately \$5 million. The three producer signatories of the NTSP have directed that these funds should be administered by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) and allocated to two areas: additional compensation for owners affected by BSE depopulation measures, and market development to benefit the Canadian beef cattle industry.

The second fund called the Industry Development Fund (IDF) comes from government contributions which would have gone into the NTSP in its final year. It contains approximately \$20 to \$24 million. The CCA believes that the IDF should be

targeted into three areas: the Beef Information Centre (BIC), Canada Beef Export Federation (CBEF) and national research. The mechanics of administering this fund have not yet been finalized.

## BSE producer compensation

The CCA has been active with the Industry Compensation Development Committee whose mandate is to help make up some of the shortfall between federal compensation levels and true market value for animals affected by the BSE depopulation strategy. The CCA fully supports the measures taken by the government to depopulate all cattle who may have been exposed to BSE. Research into BSE is still in the early stages and the CCA believes the depopulation strategy is proactive and wise. The cattle business is a \$5 billion industry due in large part to Canada's excellent health reputation. The industry compensation will only be offered to affected owners who are not currently challenging depopulation measures in court.

## Is beef getting a bum rap?

Yes according to an article in the February 1994 *Harrowsmith* magazine. Michael Webster presents a well-researched, balanced and objective look at the beef industry. The article has been reproduced for industry use. Contact the Alberta Cattle Commission for a copy.

## Animal health negotiations

*The CCA continues to work on amending Canada's Bluetongue regulations. Federal representatives are in Europe discussing the proposed amendments with trading partners. Current regulations are viewed as a non-tariff trade barrier by U.S. cattle producers. The CCA proposal has been supported by a thorough risk assessment review.*

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## Market Watch by:



### U.S. vs ALBERTA STEER CALF PRICES

JAN/91 - FEB/94



Source: Cattlefax, Canfax

## MONTHLY AVERAGES FOR ALBERTA

prices in (\$/cwt)	March average	Feb. average	change	Mar. 93 average	change
FED STEERS	95.72	91.03	+4.69	97.52	-1.80
FED HEIFERS	94.18	90.31	+3.87	94.84	-0.66
<b>FEEDER STEERS</b>					
300 - 400 lbs	150.90	145.56	+5.34	133.81	+17.09
400 - 500	144.61	138.85	+5.76	126.88	+17.73
500 - 600	134.94	131.05	+3.89	122.62	+12.32
600 - 700	127.21	123.02	+4.19	114.60	+12.61
700 - 800	116.88	113.22	+3.66	107.13	+9.75
800 - 900	107.29	105.52	+1.77	101.06	+6.23
900 +	100.25	97.59	+2.66	94.91	+5.34
<b>FEEDER HEIFERS</b>					
300 - 400 lbs	137.98	130.38	+7.60	121.58	+16.40
400 - 500	131.93	127.52	+4.41	117.40	+14.53
500 - 600	125.20	120.55	+4.65	112.48	+12.72
600 - 700	118.00	112.66	+5.34	106.80	+11.20
700 - 800	110.78	106.25	+4.53	101.83	+8.95
800 +	101.27	100.10	+1.17	95.40	+5.87

CANFAX is a non profit market information service that offers its members detailed weekly and monthly market reports and a member-only hotline to get up to the minute information. For more information call Anne or Keith at 275-5110.

## ACC Market Information Service

Slaughter Cattle Information 274-4340  
Feeder Cattle Information 274-4345

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